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A Review of Price, Principle, and the Environment, by Mark Sagoff

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Environmentalism and economics have a complicated relationship. Sound environmental policy is often perceived to be at odds with welfare-maximizing policy; restrictions on the development and use of land are probably the chief example of this conflict. At the same time, however, environmentalists often employ the analytical tools of welfare economics—as well as its scientific cachet—to provide support for their policies. Thus there is both a resistance to and reliance on welfare economics. In *Price, Principle, and the Environment*,[1] philosopher Mark Sagoff argues that, with a few exceptions, environmentalism should cease its reliance on economic analysis. To understand why Sagoff believes this, it is helpful to begin by examining some of the intellectual history he draws upon; for like all troubled couples, environmentalism and economics have a long past.

In the late sixties and early seventies, neoclassical economists such as William Nordhaus and James Tobin began to argue that the scarcity of natural resources did not impose a limit on the production of goods and services. Instead their models suggested that technological innovation would always compensate for the effect of dwindling natural resources.[2] A simple explanation accounted for these results. As natural resource inputs to

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1. MARK SAGOFF, PRICE, PRINCIPLE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT (2004). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 294 pp. $25 (paper).

2. William D. Nordhaus & James Tobin, *Is Growth Obsolete?* 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH 509, 523 (1972); *see also* John Krutilla, *Conservation Reconsidered*, 57 THE AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW 777, 777-78 (1967); Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 33.

production become scarcer, the cost of production using those resources increases. In competitive markets, this creates an incentive for producers either to conserve the limited resource or, more importantly, to substitute a more plentiful resource for the scarce one. Resource substitution is in turn made possible by human innovation and technology. Thus, according to Nordhaus and Tobin, a competitive market incentivizes the development of means to compensate for nature's dwindling stocks.[3] Such a view implies that, for example, if whales had gone extinct in the late nineteenth century it would have had little economic effect, despite the contemporary reliance on their blubber. Rather, people would (and indeed did) develop alternative sources of fuel and lubrication. Likewise, the disappearance of the last wild ancestor of cattle 200 years ago was of little moment to producers who domesticated its descendants.[4]

The theory that human innovation compensates for the scarcity of natural resources undercut those environmentalists who had employed classical economics to justify policies promoting conservation, or "resource husbandry."[5] These environmentalists had adopted Malthus's argument that the use of natural resources in production imposed limits on economic growth. From the standpoint of environmental conservation two limits were central. First, that natural resource inputs are finite implies that society must determine an optimal rate of consumption of those resources, that is, the rate of current consumption that will maximize welfare over time. Since present supply may affect future demand, this is not a trivial problem. Second, because the natural resources necessary for production are finite, production of a good will cease when the resources required to make it are depleted. By articulating these problems, classical economics provided environmentalism with a theoretical basis for advocating the responsible conservation (and protection) of natural resources.

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3. According to Nordhaus and Tobin:

> [T]he nightmare of a day of reckoning and economic collapse when, for example, all fossil fuels are forever gone seems to be based on failure to recognize the existing and future possibilities of substitute materials and processes. As the day of reckoning approaches, fuel prices will provide—as they do not now—strong incentives for such substitutions, as well as for the conservation of remaining supplies.

Nordhaus & Tobin, *supra* note 2, at 524.

4. Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 34-35.

5. Krutilla, *supra* note 2, at 777-78.

The basis was eliminated by the conclusion that technology would compensate for resource scarcity. As Nordhaus and Tobin saw it, competitive markets would solve both of the above allocation problems, by incentivizing resource husbandry and by encouraging the development of substitutes for scare resource inputs.[6] Resource conservation required a new theoretical basis.[7]

According to Sagoff, this want of theoretical support led environmentalism to microeconomics, in particular, to the theory of externalities developed by A. C. Pigou in 1920. Pigou famously conceptualized pollution as a cost of production imposed on consumers but unrealized by producers, and thus not reflected in market price. Similarly, economist John Krutilla conceptualized a concern for the health of the environment as a consumer preference. The difficulty with such a preference is that—like a preference for clean air—it is not readily expressible in the market; so even though consumers may be willing to pay to protect the environment, producers do not realize this willingness as revenue.[8] Thus, according to Krutilla, the market fails to correctly price the environment, and regulation should correct for this failure. In particular, government regulation should protect the environment in cases where, if the market were functioning correctly, price would shift upwards to reflect consumer willingness-to-pay (WTP). Because consumers are willing to pay to simply preserve the environment in an unchanged state (so-called "existence value"), Krutilla's work insulates conservation from the result that human innovation discovers substitutes for scarce natural resource inputs. Justified by "market failure," conservation (and preservation) policy thus received a firm theoretical footing in basic welfare economics.[9]

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6. *See, e.g.*, Nordhaus and Tobin, *supra* note 2, at 522.

7. Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 36.

8. *Compare* Krutilla, *supra* note 2, at 779 *with* Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 37-38. It is not clear to me that Sagoff's reading of the market failure Krutilla diagnoses is correct. According to Krutilla, the reason private resource owners might fail to acquire revenue equal to the willingness to pay of individuals is because of the difficulty of perfect price discrimination. While a few individuals may value a preserved natural space, many other consumers may not; unless the owner can price discriminate, he will not realize the former individuals' economic value.

9. For simplicity I have not distinguished preservation policy from resource conservation policy. In the chapter where Sagoff relates the above intellectual history, he also does not distinguish the two, but speaks generally of "justifying regulation." Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 36. One could argue that Krutilla's theory justifies preservation better than it does conservation.

The economics of this story are familiar. Yet, as Sagoff observes, Krutilla's defense of environmental regulation is significant for philosophical reasons as well. A defense of conservation using the tools of welfare economics embeds assumptions about *why* it is that conservation is a wise policy. It is wise, says the economist, because individuals prefer it. In other words, according to Krutilla resources ought to be conserved because individual consumers prefer that certain "natural objects" be preserved in an unchanged state.[10] The value of conservation defended on these terms thus consists in the benefit nature provides consumers. In philosophical terms, the value of providing a benefit is *instrumental* value. Krutilla therefore defends conservation on instrumental grounds.

Yet, according to Sagoff, instrumental value is not the only kind of value.[11] We know there are other types of value, says Sagoff, because we humans make other kinds of judgments than judgments that something is valuable because it benefits us. First, we often judge that something is valuable because we regard it as being good *in general*, not for us as individuals. For example, one might argue that conserving resources is the just the right thing to do; that it is simply right to conserve and not to waste. Sagoff believes that such a judgment does not reflect the instrumental value of conservation, but rather its *moral* value. Second, we humans often judge something to be valuable because of how it is on its own, independent of its effects on us. Philosophers call these independent features "intrinsic" properties. While there are other intrinsic properties, the one most important to environmentalism is beauty. According to Sagoff, to regard a mountain as beautiful is to judge it according to how it is in itself.[12] Many judgments about the value of protecting the environment are *aesthetic* judgments.

Sagoff thus argues that we humans make at least three kinds of judgments (instrumental, moral, and aesthetic), which reflect three sorts of values. In contrast, welfare economics involves only instrumental judgments and instrumental value. This paucity is both a source of strength and weakness for welfare economics. It is perhaps because it recognizes only the instrumental judgments of consumer preference that economics can lay claim to being "objective." After all, it was an accomplishment of microeconomics

10. Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 37.

11. *Id.* at 1-3, 8-11.

12. *Id.* at 2, 17-18. While certainly plausible, this view of aesthetic judgments is disputed within philosophy.

to show that when consumers could express their preferences (their instrumental value) to producers, goods would be allocated in a way that produced at least one "winner" and no "losers"—an objectively superior state of affairs to the one pre-transaction.[13] At the same time, the exclusion of moral and aesthetic judgment leaves the economic view of human interaction strangely flat. Have economists nothing to say about the other values humans ascribe to things in the world? This worry is especially troubling in the environmental context, where those other kinds of values are prominent. The environmentalist says that the Grand Canyon is *beautiful* and that it would be *morally wrong* to let it be developed or destroyed. Thus environmental economists in particular have felt a push to account for all our judgments and values. They have done so, Sagoff thinks, by engaging in philosophy. Environmental economics accounts for the other kinds of judgments we make by reducing them to instrumental judgments.[14]

In Krutilla's case the reduction was accomplished by conceptualizing an individual's concern for the environment as a consumer preference. He understood the expression of concern for the environment as an instrumental judgment, which evinced a preference for environmental protection that could be satisfied by the appropriate regulation. Krutilla's conceptualization of environmental concern is not a theorem of welfare economics; it does not concern the proper relation between preference, value, and price. Rather, as Sagoff correctly insists, it is a full-blown philosophical theory.[15] Krutilla's is an account of what makes it the case that individuals care about the environment. What makes it the case, says Krutilla, is a consumer preference and a WTP. Talk of moral rightness and beauty is just cover for economic value.[16]

It is these philosophical implications, and the economic theories from which they follow, that Sagoff targets in *Price,*

13. This is what is known as the Pareto-superior measure of efficiency; it assumes no externalities. *See generally* RICHARD POSNER, ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF LAW 4 (5th ed. 1998).

14. This issue is of course not confined to the environmental context. It has been a general difficulty in law and economics for some time. *See, e.g.*, Guido Calabresi & A. Douglas Melamed, *Property Rules, Liability Rules, and Inalienability*, 85 Harv. L. Rev. 1102-04 (1972).

15. *See generally id.* at 4-6.

16. "What makes it the case" that someone has a concern is not meant to refer to the (perhaps psychological) cause of the concern, but the ground on which it is *true* that the person has the concern. Does the fact that the person has the concern follow from his having a preference? Whether this is so is a philosophical question.

Principle, and the Environment. Sagoff makes three basic arguments. First, he argues that contemporary welfare economics fails on its own terms as a coherent theoretical framework for addressing environmental problems. Second, Sagoff believes that the orientation and methodology employed in contemporary environmental economics and ecological economics actually vitiates the environmental movement. He asserts that economic arguments for the protection and conservation of the environment alloy the arguments environmentalists should be making. This criticism in turn suggests the third central argument of the book: that instead of economic analysis and scientific study, environmentalists should employ moral and aesthetic arguments in favor of their policies; and that instead of attempting to achieve these policies through a nationwide movement relying heavily on the courts, environmentalists should encourage democratic deliberation between affected local parties, on the model of the Quincy Library Group. In what follows, I will briefly examine each of these arguments.

Sagoff's attack on welfare economics, occurring over the first half of *Price, Principle, and the Environment,* is ambitious and polemical. Much of his ire attaches to the emphasis contemporary environmentalists place on welfare-maximization in policy making, as opposed to moral or ethical considerations. Sagoff holds that environmentalists should not rely on analyses of social welfare in environmental policy making at all. But this isn't his only criticism of economic analysis; Sagoff also makes several general attacks on welfare economics as well. His position can be summarized in the following five theses: (1) Welfare economics has no normative foundation; either it is empirically false or it is tautologically true. (2) The notion of preference on which welfare economics relies is either unobservable or empirically empty. (3) Price does not relate to the benefit a good or service provides. (4) WTP is either not measurable or does not capture benefit. (5) There are no external costs; thus the analysis of pollution based on externalities is mistaken Here I have space only to explore the first thesis, that welfare economics has no normative foundation.

Welfare economics argues that the goal of public policy is to maximize social welfare, which is in turn measured by WTP. Markets are typically the best means for consumers to express their WTP and thus for accomplishing the welfare-maximizing allocation of goods. But sometimes markets fail. According to one

view, when a market fails, preventing consumers with the highest WTP from acquiring the good or service they prefer, the government ought to regulate to compensate for the failure. In this way welfare economics supports certain forms of government regulation. Because it purports to justify regulation, though, it is important for the theory to have a normative foundation. A normative foundation would answer *why* the government ought to compensate for market failures, as opposed to, say, simply permitting them. Why is it a good thing to distribute goods and services to those who are willing to pay the most for them?

One very basic answer to this question is that WTP evinces consumer preference. Since individuals are happier when they can satisfy their preferences, and less happy when they cannot, WTP is connected to happiness. Happiness in turn is simply good in itself. Therefore if the market is the best means for distributing goods and services to those who are willing to pay the most for them, it follows that the market is the best means for making people happy. For this reason, a regulatory correction of failing markets is good.

Sagoff observes that this justification for using welfare economics as a policy science is empirically substantive. That is, it asserts a relation between an economic behavior, the satisfaction of preferences, and a psychological state that we ought to be able to independently verify, happiness. Because it asserts such a connection, though, the view is open to empirical disconfirmation, and Sagoff cites several studies which he suggests do just this.[17] Using income as a proxy for the satisfaction of preferences (the higher one's income, the greater WTP a consumer has), Sagoff adduces evidence that once basic needs are met increases in income do not result in increases in happiness. For example, as buying power climbed in America, happiness did not. Evidently this is true comparatively as well; "researchers consistently find that there is very little difference in the levels of reported happiness found in rich and very poor countries."[18] Sagoff thus disputes the empirical connection between satisfaction of preference and happiness, and with it, the normative basis of welfare economics.

Sagoff is careful to note that there is an alternative interpretation of WTP that asserts no such connection with happiness. Sagoff cites Richard Posner, who suggests that the

17. *Id.* at 48.
18. *Id.*

"'most important thing to bear in mind about the concept of value [in the economist's sense] is that it is based on what people are willing to pay for something rather than . . . happiness.'"[19] On this view, the thesis that goods should go to those whom they would benefit the most is not a claim about the happiness those goods would create in the individual acquiring them. Rather, that an individual would benefit the most from a good simply means the individual would be willing to pay the most for it.

Sagoff observes that this makes the fundamental normative basis of welfare economics as a policy science into a tautology. It is tautologically true that those who are willing to pay the most for a good or service value it the most and would benefit the most from receiving it, since valuing it the most just means being willing to pay the most for the good or service. But what reason is there for the government to regulate markets that fail to distribute goods to those who are willing to pay the most for them?

Sagoff's argument here is apropos, even if not entirely original. Policy making, as he later says, is not an activity that can be guided entirely by social science. Social science will not pick out from among the alternative courses of action those most appropriate for us citizens because "appropriate" is a normative word. Thus we require a means to determine whether distributing goods to those who have the highest WTP is actually (in the normative sense) appropriate. If economics lacks a normative foundation, then there is simply nothing internal to welfare economics to recommend it as against competing regulatory policies. The appearance of normativity is created, says Sagoff, by the continual conflation of the empirically false and tautologically true claims above. It is hard to argue that goods should not be allocated to those who "value them the most" or to those who would "benefit the most" from them—unless one remembers that "value them the most" does not mean what it might ordinarily be supposed to mean, but simply "is willing to pay the most for them."

Sagoff does not follow this argument to its conclusion, but it is worth doing so to see its impact on the discussion above. If welfare and environmental economics are only tautologically true, then what purports to be an instrumental judgment in favor of environmental regulation is actually not instrumental at all. For if welfare economics is only tautologically true, then the sense in

19. *Id.* at 48-49.

which a concerned individual benefits from environmental protection is not the sense in which it is good for that individual. On the tautological interpretation, "benefit" and "value" are code words which stand for WTP, not happiness. Since they are code words (and are not given their normal meaning), they do not imply that the individual concerned about the environment is any happier after government regulation. But without some normative foundation, it is not obvious why the government should intervene to correct for market failures. Keeping separate the empirical and tautological interpretations of "benefit" and "value" thus makes clear what welfare economics must establish to be rightfully entitled to its role in policy-making, namely, an account of *why* the government ought to regulate as the theory recommends.

The second major argument in *Price, Principle, and the Environment* is that the use of economics in environmentalism actually compromises its goals. We can reconstruct Sagoff's position as the following argument (not meant to be formally valid):

There are three types of judgments: instrumental, moral and aesthetic. These are not reducible. To use Sagoff's epigram, "beliefs are not benefits."[20]

Environmental economics and ecological economics employ instrumental judgments to protect the environment.

These instrumental judgments fail.

These instrumental judgments also undercut the moral and aesthetic judgments that support protecting the environment.

Therefore, we ought to reject environmental economics.

Step (1) claims there are three types of judgments. Sagoff supports Step (1) mostly through intuition and casual reflection about what kinds of things we say, especially about the environment.

Step (2) uses the philosophical categories of Step (1)—instrumental, moral, and aesthetic—to analyze the arguments made by environmental and ecological economists in support of protecting the environment. Sagoff classifies economic arguments as purely instrumental for the reasons explained above. Sagoff also supports this classification by examining particular arguments

20. *Id.* at 47. "Beliefs are not benefits" is a slogan Sagoff uses to stand for the idea that aesthetic and moral judgments are not reducible to instrumental judgments. *See id.*

made in environmental and ecological economics. Of particular note is Sagoff's account of the popular "ecosystem services" argument, according to which we ought to preserve undisturbed ecosystems because they can provide valuable services to humans (for example, purifying water). The argument suggests that we ought to protect the environment because it provides services for which we are willing to pay; thus the environment is economically valuable. As discussed above, this could be considered an instrumental argument, depending on how we understand "value."

Sagoff's support for Steps (3) and (4) involves some of the strangest moments of the book. If Sagoff merely regarded the arguments of environmental economists as wrong-headed because purely instrumental, one would assume that he would put such arguments aside and offer his own moral and aesthetic arguments. But because Sagoff believes Step (4), that instrumental judgments in support of the environment undercut moral and aesthetic judgments, he cannot leave the arguments of environmental economics alone. Thus in the later chapters, Sagoff offers extended critiques of current instrumental arguments defending environmentalism like ecosystem services and the justification of pollution regulation based on its analysis as an external cost.

Sagoff's attack on the ecosystem services argument is especially eye opening. Much of the impetus for ecosystem services emerged from an article written in *Nature* in 1998, in which the authors note that New York City invested $1 billion to purchase and preserve the Catskills mountains rather than invest $6-8 billion in a new water filtration plant.[21] Biologists have noted that the city's decision to invest in the Catskills rather than in a filtration plant demonstrates the valuable services that undisturbed ecosystems can provide. According to most accounts of the project, increasing agricultural activity in the Catskills region threatened to inhibit its service as a natural filter for drinking water in New York City. Rather than invest in a filtration plant, the city acted to protect the watershed's natural condition..

According to Sagoff, however, parts of this story are simply untrue. He claims that increasing development has not threatened the Catskills watershed because the region has been developmentally stagnant for some time. For example, the Catskills population has remained stable since the Civil War. Farms now

21. *Id.* at 128; Graciela Chichilnisky & Geoffrey Heal, *Economic Returns from the Biosphere*, 391 NATURE 629, 629-30 (1998).

occupy less than 5% of the watershed, and industry and residence each occupy 1% of the land. The majority of the land in the Catskills is forested or vacant.[22] Sagoff reports that the only pollution threat to the city's water supply is increasing fauna, whose fecal matter causes bacterial outbreaks. Furthermore, a recent study indicates that the quality of water in New York City remains good.[23] Thus the city's investment in the Catksills was triggered, says Sagoff, not by declining water quality but by new EPA regulations.[24] The investment has come nowhere near the $1 billion dollar mark mention in *Nature*.[25]

While Sagoff's investigative journalism regarding what he calls the "Catskills parable" is welcome, it is unclear why he believes he must impugn *all* instrumental arguments in defense of the environment. Sagoff never offers a convincing defense of Step (4). Yet Step (4) is crucial to his thesis that instrumental judgments ought to be eschewed for moral and aesthetic ones. The closest he comes to a defense of Step (4) are two very brief arguments in different sections of the book. First, in Chapter Two Sagoff argues that to defend the environment on moral terms is "to state a moral fact,"[26] and that instrumental judgments about the benefits nature provides require "surrender[ing]" such statements of fact. Sagoff does not elaborate on what he means by these claims, and this is perhaps intentional on his part. What counts as a "fact" is a vexed question for philosophers. But simply using the term as we naturally do, it is hard to see how moral judgments are distinguished from instrumental ones on this ground. Instrumental judgments surely state facts as well—namely, the facts of one's preferences. If I say I would prefer a chocolate shake, it states the fact that I prefer chocolate to the other flavors on offer. It is also hard to see how making an instrumental judgment could be thought to require surrendering one's moral judgments on the matter. In fact, it is natural to suppose that someone prefers to do what she regards as moral. In other words, the morality of a certain course of action may be the very reason I benefit by following it. Doing the right thing makes me happy.

Sagoff's second defense of Step (4), also brief, is that

22. Sagoff, *supra* note 1, at 131.
23. *Id.*
24. *Id.* at 132-33.
25. *Id.* at 132-34.
26. *Id.* at 39.

instrumental judgments undercut environmentalism because they are subject to change. Instrumental arguments in support of the environment will change as what benefits individuals changes, since what benefits individuals is the basis for instrumental judgment.[27] This is certainly true. But of course moral and aesthetic judgments change as well. I take it as obvious that what we find beautiful changes over time. A little reflection also suggests that what we take to be right or morally appropriate changes as well (regardless of whether it is in fact right or morally appropriate). In short, Sagoff's worry about the inconstancy of instrumental judgment applies to moral and aesthetic judgment as well. All three kinds of judgments change.

Yet what is most problematic about Sagoff's philosophical dispute with environmental ethics is that he provides an inadequate defense of the core of his position, Step (1). The trouble is that Step (1) is not an empirical claim, but a philosophical one. Therefore, even if individuals *say* things such as "we ought to save the environment because it is right," or "the desert is so beautiful," it does not follow that these individuals are making moral and aesthetic judgments, respectively. They could be using moral and aesthetic *words* but making instrumental *judgments*. That is, while an individual might say, "we ought to do X because it is right," he might really mean "we ought to do X because I prefer that course of action." What he means by what he says—what makes what he says true or not—is a substantive philosophical question. Sagoff does observe that people often express concern for the environment when protecting it would not obviously benefit them. For example, people often express a desire to protect areas that they neither will nor desire to visit. Sagoff suggests that since these individuals will not visit the place nor desire ro, they do not benefit from its preservation. But, of course, one may simply like the idea that there are places at the far reaches of the planet that are left unsullied by human development. Knowing that this is so may be enough to bring one pleasure, regardless of whether or not one ever visits such a place. Indeed, one may have no such desire to visit the place.

These two criticisms—that welfare economics is theoretically unsound and that its use undermines environmentalism—lead Sagoff to the book's third major argument. Sagoff believes that

27. *Id.* at 175-76.

environmentalism should be based on moral and aesthetic arguments for protecting nature, not on instrumental ones. One crucial difference between moral judgments and instrumental judgments in this regard is that the former, but not the latter, respond to "the force of the better argument."[28] In other words, moral and aesthetic judgments can be rationally criticized, rationally defended, and accepted or rejected on these grounds. For this reaosn, proper environmentalism has a strong democratic streak to it according to Sagoff; it is the result of individuals coming together to exchange reasons why society ought to preserve and protect the environment and to justify policies on how to do this effectively. Sagoff repeatedly compares this ideal of democracy, in which the participants are the locally affected, with the current system, in which a distant regulatory agency hires economists to endlessly engage in WTP and cost-benefit studies, only to have the resultant policy challenged in court by special interest groups.

Sagoff is particularly enamored of the Quincy Library Group (QLG).[29] QLG comprised environmentalists and loggers from Quincy, CA, who in the early 1990s negotiated a plan for harvesting and managing the Plumas, Lassen and Tahoe national forests, which surrounded the town. Before the QLG was formed, disputes between environmentalists and loggers in Quincy had reached a boiling point. QLG was successful in developing a forest management plan and in civilizing the dispute. After the U.S. Forest Service refused to implement the QLG plan, its members went directly to Congress. Congress passed the QLG plan into law, but allowed a provision for study to ensure that the plan did not impact endangered species.[30] The Forest Service subsequently engaged in several impact studies. After a new management plan was released, QLG sued, arguing that it violated the "letter and spirit" of the law.[31]

Despite what he sees as its ultimate failure, Sagoff regards the direct negotiation between interested local parties in Quincy as a model for the environmental movement. QLG did not involve extensive economic studies of WTP and benefit, which Sagoff regards as worthless and even detrimental to environmentalism.

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28. *Id.* at 3.
29. *Id.* at 201-31.
30. *Id.* at 223.
31. *Id.* at 224.

What it did involve was local parties presenting arguments in support of competing visions for the appropriate management of the national forest. By forcing the disputing parties to reasonably confront each other, the process both calmed the tense atmosphere and produced a resolution to the dispute. Furthermore, since the local stakeholders were all involved in the policy-making process, they could not claim it unsatisfactory later.[32] According to Sagoff, Quincy illustrates a model of policy development that is both thoroughly democratic and effective.

Surprisingly, Sagoff does not indicate whether the arguments presented by the opposing sides in QLG were moral and aesthetic or instrumental arguments. It is hard to imagine that they were not instrumental. The tension in the town was partially the result of the impact of logging limits on the local economy, and the well-being of the local economy is a paradigmatic instrumental concern. A detailed examination of the arguments made would be a welcome addition, since Sagoff never presents in any detail an account of how moral environmental deliberation is supposed to work. In fact, the moral judgments about protecting the environment that Sagoff adduces have the flavor of epigrams. "Morality teaches us that we are rich in relation to the number of things we can afford to let alone."[33] What this "teaching" could contribute to policy making in a context like Quincy is unclear at best. That loggers with an interest in making a living would react positively to this comment and that it would produce any kind of workable consensus is perhaps overly optimistic. If anything, it is likely that moral judgments would serve as starting points for policy making and that instrumental exceptions would be carved to meet the exigencies of the moment. Yet Sagoff would regard this not as progressing, but as succumbing.

Sagoff's notion that local parties should make exclusively moral or aesthetic arguments in defense of the environment renders environmentalism oddly cerebral. For Sagoff, environmentalists should *not* prefer or desire to protect the environment. Rather, they should offer "disinterested" arguments that prevail by the

32. As it happened, this did not prevent national environmental groups from interfering. The Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and the Audubon Society all made efforts to prevent the QLG policy from being made into law. *Id.* at 221-224. The Audubon Society, whose local chapter was part of the QLG, even sent a letter to the Senate suggesting that it ignore the local chapter. *Id.* at 222.

33. *Id.* at 175.

force of the better argument. I wonder whether environmentalism ever really could take such a form. While there are good moral reasons to want to save the environment, environmentalism as a movement and a personal orientation does not spring from the dictates of reason alone. Environmentalism is infused with "interest," all the way down. While Sagoff has provided environmentalists a welcome opportunity for critical self-reflection, one wonders whether he deeply misunderstands the environmentalist, for whom the destruction of the environment is not simply irrational but deeply upsetting.